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IB - 47/63
27 March 1963
Copy 2 of 5

MEMORANDUM TO: Chief, Estimates Staff, ONE

ATTENTION : FE Branch

FROM : Chief, CIA/FID (NPIC)

SUBJECT : Road Study; China-Laos-Burma Border Area

REFERENCE : Requirement No. ONE/2/63
Project No. C 278/63

Declass Review by
NGA.

1. This memorandum is in partial response to the referenced requirement which asks for an analysis of recent photo coverage of selected routes in the China-Burma-Laos border area to determine width, alignment and type of surface where possible; and a location and description of military installations in this area. The following description gives such information for the selected routes and the enclosed annotated map shows their alignment.

2. Ssu-mao to Ta-ping-chang to Chiang-cheng (and eastward to Meng-tsu) Road.

This was an improved road with many switch backs, traversing rough hill country of relatively steep relief. The road ranges from 15 to 20 feet in width and is an unsurfaced, graded earth road. Two major bridges were observed: a deck-type, arch bridge 200 by 20 feet crossing the Lo-so Chiang (River) at 22 33N - 101 28E and a deck-type arch bridge 300 by 20 feet located approximately 8 nm east of Chiang-Cheng. Other smaller bridges were also noted. From Chiang-Cheng the road continues north approximately 11 nm where construction ends. A bridge is under construction across the Black River at 22 49N - 101 55E.

3. Chiang-Cheng to Muong-ou-neva (Laos) to Muong-ou-tay to Boun Nawa to Bun Tai Road.

No road was observed following such an alignment. A narrow road for rural traffic, did however, extend south from Chiang-Cheng approximately 6 nautical miles.

4. Ssu-mao to Che-li to Fo-hai (Meng-hai) Ta-lo Road

From Ta-lo (21 41N - 100 03E) to Meng-hun (21 48N - 100 23E) this road was single lane (estimated width 10 feet), had an earth surface and was serviceable. From Meng-hun to 21 55N - 100 21E the alignment was considerably improved and the road was graded and slightly widened (estimated width 12 to 15 feet). From 21 55N - 100 21E to Ssu-mao the road was two lane, has a graded earth surface, probably strengthened by the addition of crushed stone or gravel. The road has been recently constructed and is in good condition. A considerable number of curves and switch backs were observed in some sections.

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Bridges were observed at all river crossings with the exception of the Mekong at Ta-lo. Here a road bridge is under construction with ten piers having been completed. Work is underway on the abutments and approaches on each bank. When completed this bridge will be approximately 1000 feet long. Currently traffic crosses the Mekong by ferry just south of the bridge site.

From 21 55N - 100 21E on the Ssu-mao to Che-li to Fo-hai to Ta-lo Road a good two lane, graded, earth road probably strengthened with gravel or crushed stone, extends NNW, passing through Nan-chiao (22 01N - 100 15E), Meng-man (22 09N - 100 07E) and continues on past Chen-pien (22 33N - 99 59E) where obliquity, scale of the photography, and poor map detail precluded tracing the alignment further.

5. Ssu-mao to Ta-ping-chang to I-pang to Chen-yueh to Meng-hsing to Meng-peng to Meng-mang Road.

Che-li to Meng-kan to Meng-hsing to Meng-pan to Boun-Newa (Laos) to Phong-saly Road.

Meng-pan to Meng-la to Muong Yo (Laos) to Boun-Newa Road.

These three roads only exist in part and even where they do exist they do not follow the alignment shown on the map enclosure of the requirement nor do they pass through the towns mentioned.

It appears that two roads do exist but with entirely different alignments and obviously different names as shown in paragraphs A and B:

A. Che-li to Man-ha-kuo to Meng-wen to Meng-la to Meng-peng Road.

This two lane road (estimated width 15 feet) has a graded earth surface, probably strengthened with gravel or crushed stone. It has many curves and switch-backs in its hilly portions and appears to be serviceable and in good condition. Two major bridges were observed; one is single lane pontoon bridge 160 by 10 feet spans the Lo-so Chiang (River) at Man-ha-kuo and the other is a two lane deck-type bridge 200 by 25 feet across a tributary of the Lo-so Chiang at 21 50N - 101 20E.

At 21 25N - 101 20E, approximately 3.5 nm SE of Meng-peng a single lane (estimated width 8 feet) earth surfaced branch road fords the Nan-la Ho (River) and continues south to Meng-mang (21 18N - 101 18E) where improvements end.

B. Meng-La to Man-chuang to Muong Yo to Boun Neua to Phong Saly Road.

Obliquity and poor maps preclude exact alignment and determination of width and surface for the entire route; however, it appears to be a two lane graded, earth surfaced road probably strengthened with gravel or crushed stone. It has many curves and switch-backs but appears to be serviceable and in good condition. A deck-type bridge, 225 by 25 feet crossing the Nan-la Ho (River), 2.5 nm south of Meng-la was observed.

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6. Che-li to Meng-ha to Mong Un (Burma) Road

No road following such an alignment was observed. However, a probable two lane, graded, earth road strengthened with gravel or crushed stone extends from its junction with the Che-li to Fo-hai highway approximately one nautical mile west of Che-li southward to Man-san (21 30N - 100 38E).

7. Meng-pan to Meng-la to Shang-yung to Batene (Laos) to Nam Tha Road.

This road does not appear to be in existence. A single lane unimproved road extends north from Meng-la a few miles before becoming a trail suitable for animals or porters. Portions of the trail have been cut through the forest sometime in the past as if it were a clearing for a road; however, these portions are now overgrown with grass and weeds and there is no indications of any new road construction.

From Man-chuang (21 26N - 101 39E) a single lane unimproved rural road extends south to approximately Mo-hsieh-ching (21 22N - 101 39E) before it too becomes a trail.

8. Muong Sing (Laos) - Keng Lap (Burma) Road.

Muong Sing - Nam Tha-Vien Pou Kha-Ban Houei Sal Road.

Muong Sing - Vien Pou Kha Road.

No roads through these towns or following the alignment as shown on the map enclosure to the requirement were observed.

Obliquity precluded detailed analysis; however, it appeared that roads radiated from Muong Sing for a very short distance. It was impossible to determine whether they were improved or whether it was only the rural traffic converging from many trails that gave width and light tone to the surface. The above mentioned "roads" did not extend for any distance and no construction activity was noted.

9. The enclosed annotated map shows the approximate alignment of the roads discussed above:

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10. That portion of the requirement requesting location and description of any military installations observed between 100 00E - 102 00E and 20 40N - 22 00N will follow at a later date.

11. The photo analysts on this project were [redacted]

[redacted] who may be contacted on [redacted] should you have further questions regarding this project.

ENCLOSURE: 1 annotated map